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Portrait of Spy as Golden Young Man

By JON NORDHEIMER
Special to The New York Times

OSLO, Jan. 28 — Only 10 days ago, with Secretary of State George P. Shultz here for talks, Arne Treholt was, as usual, close to the action.

Mr. Treholt, as head of the foreign press section of the Foreign Ministry, was in charge of press arrangements for Mr. Shultz's visit.

Personable, industrious and well connected, the 41-year-old Mr. Treholt was widely regarded as one of the golden young men of public life in Norway.

Less than 24 hours later, he was under arrest, charged with spying for the Soviet Union. The Norwegian security police said Mr. Treholt was detained at the airport on his way to Vienna, where he planned to hand over secret documents to his contact from the K.G.B., the Soviet secret police. A week later commentators here were calling Mr. Treholt the greatest traitor to Norway since Quisling.

Repercussions Awaited

The case is expected to have far-reaching repercussions in domestic politics at a time when Norway is at a critical stage of development, both as an oil-producer and as a nation of growing strategic importance on NATO's northern flank. American and NATO forces are stockpiling military supplies and installing new electronic listening posts along Norway's 1,200-mile coast.

So far there has been no indication that Mr. Treholt had access to information that could seriously compromise strategic planning in the region by the Atlantic alliance

But he had cast a long shadow of influence on the left wing of the Labor Party, the dominant Socialist party in Norway that has governed for most of the postwar period. So the investigation into his role in the party and in Government over the last dozen years is bound to strengthen the hand of the ruling center-right coalition.

Moreover, top Norwegian officials say the case has already strained relations between Norway and the Soviet Union, which share a 120-mile border in the Arctic that is NATO's closest position to the Kola Peninsula, headquarters for the Soviet Northern Fleet.

The Norwegian Government is expected to announce reprisals against the Russians early next week as a first result of the Treholt case. A sizable number of Soviet diplomats and trade mission members are expected to be expelled, according to high-ranking Government officials.

Of Anti-American Dogma

Some say the Treholt case also provides a disturbing look into the generation in Europe that first came to political awareness in the 1960's.

Associated Press

Arne Treholt

There has been speculation that the five-hour Shultz visit gave investigators a chance to set a trap for Mr. Treholt. Investigators said Mr. Treholt was carrying classified documents with him when he was arrested. But a top Government offical said the documents had no connection with the talks that Mr. Shultz held the day before with Foreign Minister Svenn Stray and other officials.

Like Losing 'a Spiritual Son'

Jens Evensen, a Norwegian expert on international law who was instrumental in bringing Mr. Treholt, a former journalist, into Government, said the news of his arrest was like losing "a spiritual son."

It is said here that Mr. Evensen could become one of the first casualties of the Treholt affair. Mr. Evensen, who for two decades has taken up causes popular with the left, is a leading candidate for a vacant seat at the Court of International Law at the Hague.

Mr. Treholt was the older man's closest adviser when Mr. Evensen became Norway's minister to the Law of the Sea Conference and when he negotiated in Moscow a longstanding dispute over fishing boundaries in the Barents Sea. The interim agreement accepted by Mr. Evensen is considered by some in Government and press circles to be highly favorable to the Soviet Union.

In addition, a speech by Mr. Evensen in 1980 reviving the call for a nuclear-free zone in the Nordic countries later spurred the Labor Party to adopt this goal as policy. Reports have circulated that Mr. Treholt wrote the speech, but Mr. Evensen denies it.

"We grew up on anti-Americanism because of the Vietnam War," said a woman who has known Mr. Treholt since they were student activists together at Oslo University. "For some reason, unlike the rest of us, Arne's dogmatic views never mellowed."

A Government official expressed a direct question that was on many lips: "If Treholt, who enjoyed the best of Norwegian life, could do it, how many more like him are there who grew up in his generation, not only in Norway but in all of Europe?"

Government security investigators say he has admitted his role as a Soviet spy and is cooperating with officals.

On Friday, Attorney General Magnar Flornes said the security police had the help of foreign counterintelligence agencies, including the Federal Bureau of Investigation, in keeping the career diplomat under surveillance for up to five years before his arrest.

Mr. Treholt was known among diplomats and politicians in Oslo as an idealist who opposed tyranny in Greece and Czechoslovakia. He was also seen to share the egalitarian interests of his father, a former Minister of Agriculture who was known as uncorruptible. The speculation in press reports quoting Government sources that he became a spy to pay off large gambling debts seemed to many to be out of character.

A Cold-Eyed Appraisal

In an interview Friday at Parliament, he gave a cold-eyed appraisal of his friend.

"Strangely, he had little ideology," Mr. Forde said. "His strongest ideology was anti-Americanism, but perhaps it was not any greater than what most people felt coming out of the Vietnam days."

In recent years, he said, Mr. Treholt rationalized Soviet oppression by saying that Moscow was forced to protect its borders because of constant threats from the West.

But, he said, his friend always had an unprincipled side. "I can honestly say he was a person who was not very much ruled by ethical standards," Mr. Forde said.

Since his arrest it has been disclosed that in the past year, before he was assigned to the press job in the Foreign Ministry, Mr. Treholt was allowed to go through a one-year course at the Norwegian defense college that included access to classified military information and tours of the top-secret NATO command post deep inside a mountain outside Oslo. Moreover, Mr. Treholt's class was taken inside the secret underground bunker designed for use by the Government as a command post at time of a war emergency.

Government officials say that, despite the risks, Mr. Treholt was given his recent assignments in the hope that his espionage activities would lead investigators both here and in the United States to other Soviet agents and rings.

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